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Media Contacts:

Kevin Condra

Violence and Injury Prevention Program

(o) 801-538-6183 (m) 801-560-2778

Bonnie Midget

Primary Children's Medical Center

(o) 801-662-6590

Summer Brings Added Danger, Death to Utah Kids

(Salt Lake City, UT) – When it comes to keeping children safe during the dangerous months of May–August, Utah ranks a dismal 39th in the nation. That's according to the first-ever *Safe Kids U.S. Summer Safety Ranking Report*, which measures the rate of accidental injury among children ages birth to 14.

The study by Safe Kids Worldwide shows Vermont led the nation in summer safety with 1.6 child deaths per 100,000 population over a 5-year period, 2000-2004. Wyoming scored last with a rate of 8.3 deaths per 100,000 and Utah's rate was 4.7 per 100,000, for a total of approximately 153 child deaths during the period.

“The good news is the report also shows Utah achieved a 10.3 percent drop in the number of childhood deaths due to summer injuries during 1997-1999,” said Janet Brooks, Safe Kids Utah Co-chair and Child Advocacy Manager, Primary Children's Medical Center. “The fact that local health departments conduct regular child car seat safety checks, and the development of the SPOT THE TOT® driveway backover prevention campaign are just two success stories that likely helped the state bring the death rate down,” Brooks added.

“Working with parents, caregivers and policymakers, as well as the state and local public health departments, we've made Utah safer for children over the past ten years,” said Brooks. “Injury prevention does save lives and we will continue to increase Safe Kids Utah efforts to address child safety.”

The study reports that nationally, an average of 17 children a day, or 2,143 children in total, died from May to August in 2004 due to injuries, many of which could have been prevented.

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In 2003, there were 28 deaths and 20,372 children in Utah ages 0-14 made emergency room visits due to summer injuries. Of those, 353 were hospitalized and at least 25% suffered a traumatic brain injury. Others may have suffered paralysis and other serious disabilities.

Safe Kids Worldwide research indicates that the five most common causes of summertime child injury deaths are:

- Drowning (up 89% percent in the summer vs. the annual monthly average)
- Biking (up 45%)
- Falls (up 21%)
- Motor vehicle passenger injuries (up 20%)
- Pedestrian injuries (up 16%)

“These results should be a wake-up call to Utah and the nation,” said Sharon Hines-Stringer, Director of Safe Kids Utah and a health educator with the Utah Department of Health Violence and Injury Prevention Program. “When a child dies every few hours from a summer injury, many of which can be prevented, we have our work cut out for us.”

Safe Kids Utah recommends the following steps to reduce summertime child injury and death:

- Ride Safe: Secure children up to 40 lbs. appropriately and securely in car seats and secure children over 40 lbs. in a booster seat until they are at least 4'9" tall and 80 lbs. Enact legislation requiring mandatory use of booster seats for children ages 5-9.
- Wheel Safe: Assure a child wears a properly fitted and adjusted helmet for the right sport, including biking, skating, and riding a scooter.
- Play Safe: Actively supervise children in and around water, on playgrounds, and in or around motor vehicles.

Release of the study coincides with National Safe Kids Week, April 28–May 6, 2007, and the start of summer, known by emergency personnel as “trauma season.” This year’s theme is *Make It A Safe Kids Summer*. It is supported by Safe Kids Worldwide’s founding sponsor, Johnson & Johnson, and local contributions.

Safe Kids Week events in Utah are being held in many communities by local Safe Kids Coalitions and public health departments. For more information on events in your area, please visit <http://www.utahsafekids.org/>. For a full copy of the *Safe Kids U.S. Summer Safety Ranking Report*, visit the Violence and Injury Prevention Program Web site at <http://www.health.utah.gov/vipp/>.

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